



# Sofa shopping 101

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Ordering upholstery can be simple or complicated, depending on your needs. Many common issues involve comparing quality, price, and function, so it's good to prepare and educate yourself before shopping. Browse websites and magazines, clip pictures, measure spaces and note details like vents, doors, and windows. Snap photos; gather rug remnants, fabrics, paint chips, the arm cover from your aunt's chair that you adore. All will provide a visual palette and help professionals understand your needs.

Considerations:

- Size - condo? great room?
- Comfort - seat depth, back height
- Appearance - casual, formal?

- Structure - life expectancy?
- Options?
- Fabrics?
- Warranties?
- Your aunt's chair, etc.

Ask sales associates about these points and find a knowledgeable person that can listen and respond to your priorities:

- Warranties on the frame and springs can last under one year. Others provide transferable lifetime warranties. Frames, springs, and seat cushions may be warranted for residential use, fabrics rarely. If you'll gift these, ask whether warranties are transferable.
- Frames made from kiln-dried solid hardwoods with reinforced corners, double-doweled and stapled are best.
- "Serpentine", "no-sag" back springs are acceptable, but look for 8-way hand-tied coil springs in the seat. Synthetic fasteners



should be used to prevent squeaking.

- Most seat cushions are high-resiliency foam, wrapped in softer fiber. Back filler is often fibrous. Softer down options meant to look and feel softer than foam might suit you. Avoid all-down; despite constant attention they still won't look neat.
- Traditional arms are rolled, finished in panel, sock, shirred and pleated treatments. Track-arms and stylish, lower and curvy English arms are fashionable and sometimes narrower.

- Integral legs on skirted pieces are good for strength. Decorative legs can vary from a few basic choices to hundreds of styles and finishes.
- If the back is high enough, attached cushions may be available. Consider attached (less maintenance, great for cats) or unattached (turn for longer life, cats aside).
- Arm covers and toss pillows of like fabric may be gratis with a sofa. Arm covers included free of charge may not match the arm pattern perfectly.

• No fabric protection covers soiling from normal use, not all fabrics can be stain-protected, and not all stains are covered. Review product warranties with each dealer.

• No upholstery is safe from heavy wear by animals, youths, or direct sunlight. Regularly vacuuming and turning cushions helps make upholstery last longer. Newer fabrics use fibers made from tough synthetics and are appropriate for many styles. Avoid cotton and rayon for wear, and avoid cotton and darker colors in direct sunlight.

Cost of ownership increases dramatically with premature replacement, and bold choices may not fit your lifestyle in a few years. Good furniture should last many years, so know what to expect, and only purchase once you're sure. Work with reputable dealers known for excellent after-sales service. Remember, this is going into your home, and that should be as important to your dealer as it is to you.

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